



## Press Release

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### **Report: Secrecy Ebbs From Bush Administration High Water Marks, Backlogs in Declassification System Grow**

WASHINGTON, Sept. 7, 2010 – The **2010 Secrecy Report Card** released today by OpenTheGovernment.org – a coalition of more than 70 groups advocating for open government– chronicles a continued decrease in most indicators of secrecy since the end of the Bush Administration and growing backlogs in the declassification system as old secrets move through the system. The report covers the first 9 months of President Obama’s Administration, which he pledged would be the most open, transparent and accountable in history.

According to Patrice McDermott, Director of OpenTheGovernment.org, “Encouraging trends are evident in these early months of the Obama Administration, in both FOIA and in general secrecy. In general, after hitting high water marks during the Bush Administration, statistics indicate the creation of new national security secrets is slowly ebbing.” In FY 2009, for example, the number of original classification decisions, the “sole sources of newly classified information,” decreased almost 10% to 183,224–down from 203,541 in 2008.

The statistics also indicate, however, that the declassification system continues to fall further behind. The report highlights examples of looming secrecy problems the Obama Administration should address, which include:

- In FY 2009, the government spent \$196 maintaining the secrets already on the books for every one dollar spent declassifying documents. Only one-half cent of every dollar spent on security classifications costs overall was spent on declassification, and 8% fewer pages were declassified than in 2008. Overall, expenditures to maintain secrecy increased 2%.
- In FY 2009, agencies received 7,843 new initial requests for Mandatory Declassification Review (MDR), which led to 69% of pages reviewed being declassified in full; 24% in part. More than 6,000 initial requests, though, were carried over into 2010.

Dr McDermott noted, “This report does not measure the impact of the President’s Open Government Initiative, which is largely focused on making information easily available to the public and increasing participation and collaboration. We continue to push to ensure the government openness and accountability promised in all areas of the Executive

Branch. We look forward to working with the Administration toward meeting this goal, and will continue to work to make sure the public has the information it needs to hold the Administration accountable.”

The only indicators covered by the report that may reflect the Administration’s open government initiative concern the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). In FY 2009, the federal government processed 55,000 more FOIA requests than it received in 2009 and reduced backlogged pending requests by almost 56,000.

The issues discussed in the Report include: classified Information and classified costs, the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), signing statements, use of state secrets, and more.

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*OpenTheGovernment.org is a coalition, transcending party lines, of more than 70 consumer and good government groups, librarians, environmentalists, labor, journalists, and others focused on pushing back governmental secrecy and promoting openness.*

Read the report here:

[http://www.openthegovernment.org/otg/SecrecyRC\\_2010.pdf](http://www.openthegovernment.org/otg/SecrecyRC_2010.pdf)